

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Planning Governance Proposal

Subcommittee modified on 9/26/2012

Basin Advisory Panel Approved June 2012 (One Member Opposed – See Meeting Summary 6/7/2012)

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to propose a governance structure for implementing a Groundwater Management Plan for the Santa Rosa Plain under AB 3030¹. The Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Plan Basin Advisory Panel approved this proposal on June 7, 2012.

Legal Framework for the Groundwater Management Plan

The Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Plan Basin Advisory Panel (Panel) came together to develop a voluntary, non-regulatory groundwater management plan. The Panel has selected to develop an AB 3030 Plan for the Santa Rosa Plain providing a comprehensive framework for managing groundwater developed through a collaborative process and enhancing funding opportunities. The legal framework for the groundwater management plan would be an “AB 3030” Plan with the governance structure for implementation consisting of a Lead Agency, Basin Advisory Panel, and Technical Advisory Committee. The governance structure for implementation would be consistent with the following.

Governance Structure for Plan Implementation

Lead Agency Role

The Sonoma County Water Agency, as the Lead Agency, has ultimate responsibility for Groundwater Management Plan implementation and funding, including studies, projects, and programs it directly or indirectly funds. The Lead Agency role is to:

- Adopt and implement the Groundwater Management Plan consistent with Panel consensus
- Participate in the Panel
- Sponsor the Panel by providing project support, coordination, and facilitation as needed
- Coordinate and garner funding to implement the Groundwater Management Plan
- Be accountable and responsible to implement the Groundwater Management Plan in accordance with the Water Code and to remain eligible for state funding
- Provide in-kind staff support via a project manager to support Plan implementation

¹ Groundwater Management Plan in compliance with the provisions of AB3030, SB 1938 and AB 359 and with Water Code Sections 10750-10755.4

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- Contract with technical consultants as necessary to support implementation of the Plan
- Coordinate, as appropriate, with the cooperating funders to ensure continued support and involvement in implementing the Groundwater Management Plan
- Develop and adopt only in collaboration with and with the concurrence of the Panel proposed rules or regulations where necessary to achieve the objectives of the Groundwater Management Plan as provided by AB 3030
- Explore options for funding groundwater management activities. In exercising this role, the Water Agency would only propose fees and assessments if the Panel recommended and approved
- Amend the Groundwater Management Plan with the concurrence and recommendation of the Basin Advisory Panel

Basin Advisory Panel Role

The Basin Advisory Panel (Panel) develops the groundwater management plan ~~in collaboration with the lead agency~~ and guides its implementation and will remain in existence as long as the plan is being implemented. The Panel discusses, provides input, and develops consensus recommendations for all activities that move forward to implement the plan. The Panel has a collaborative governance structure: the lead agency and other agencies with jurisdiction within the Santa Rosa Plain will join with community organizations, business associations, and individuals to determine the best way to implement the Groundwater Management Plan. All activities associated with implementing the Plan would be subject to approval of the Panel consistent with its charter. Panel meetings would be open to the public. The Panel's proposed action decisions would be identified prior to a meeting in an agenda and recorded in the meeting summary, including Panel member attendance. Members would be responsible to attend in person or request that an alternate or Panel member represent his or her viewpoint in decision-making. The Panel would be responsible for recommending amendments to the Groundwater Management Plan for approval by the Lead Agency's governing board.

Basin Advisory Panel (Panel) Composition

Upon approval of the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Plan, the Panel will continue to provide guidance for its implementation and any amendment of the Plan. The Panel will continue to make decisions through the collaborative approach of the Plan with representatives from each of the identified stakeholder or interest groups. Each interest group will select their representative(s) for the Panel who must be able to commit to the working agreements in the Panel Charter regarding process and defined consensus decision-making. The Panel can modify its charter using its decision-making protocols. Panel members must either live or have jurisdiction in the Santa Rosa Plain watershed. Panel members would typically serve 2-year terms. Members could serve multiple terms. The Panel would formally revisit its membership each fall when planning its work plan for the following year. An effort would be made to avoid having all new members in any one year.

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The exact continuing composition for implementation would be similar to the Panel during plan development. The Basin Advisory Panel would identify the panel composition by interest group, continuing to seek diversity of representation as part of plan development and prior to plan adoption. The Panel would be composed of representatives of the Lead Agency, General Public, Agricultural Groundwater Users, Business & Developers, Residential Groundwater Users, Government (Tribal, County and City), Environmental Organizations, Natural Resources Management Organizations, Water Suppliers, and Groundwater Technical Expertise.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Role

The Panel will designate an ad-hoc Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to work on specifics of implementation of the Plan goals and objectives; advise the Panel on technical matters; and to develop recommendations on general Plan implementation for the Panel's consideration. TAC participation is not limited to Panel members; others with groundwater or technical expertise can also participate. The TAC will assist the Panel on the following activities:

- Working with the technical consultant on Plan implementation,
- Reviewing technical data and analyses and/or recommending data analyses,
- Determining if data is adequate to address the basin management objectives, and
- Reviewing annual reports on Plan implementation.